



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
3 JUNE 2025

LOCAL DELIVERY OF THE HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an overview of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the support provided locally by the County Council over the past three years.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. In March 2022, in response to the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, the UK government set up visa schemes to allow Ukrainians fleeing war to gain a visa to seek temporary sanctuary in the UK.
3. The Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme allowed people living in the UK to sponsor visas for Ukrainians, on the basis that the sponsor hosted them in suitable accommodation for at least six months. Ukrainian guests on this scheme receive a £200 welcome payment to support their transition to life in the UK and Sponsors (hosts) could receive 'thank you' payments of £350 per month for up to 12 months. This scheme involved local authorities in:
 - Meeting Ukrainians arriving to arrival points in their area;
 - Carrying out checks on sponsors and their properties to ensure Ukrainians would be safe and in suitable accommodation;
 - Administer welcome payments to Ukrainian guests and 'Thank you' payments to their hosts;
 - Provide support where host relationships broke down and alternative host or other accommodation was required for Ukrainians.
4. Local authorities could claim tariff payments of £10,500 per arrival into their area to be used to administer the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme locally. This funds all costs associated with running the scheme on a day-to-day basis (including costs incurred by district councils). The only exception is 'Thank you' payments paid out to eligible sponsors/hosts which can be claimed back from Central Government separately.
5. Funding was also provided to cover the costs of Education provision for eligible children under the scheme. In total £1.9m was received which covered costs incurred by schools with Homes for Ukraine pupils and other related/relevant costs. This funding was only provided for an initial period – essentially until the pupils

themselves would have been included on the school census information that drives the usual funding streams for Education.

6. Two other Ukraine visa schemes were set up and fully administered by the Home Office. The Ukraine Family visa scheme allowed people in the UK to sponsor visas for Ukrainian family members. The Ukraine Visa Extension scheme allowed Ukrainians with an existing visa to stay in the UK to extend that visa.
7. In July 2022, guidelines and an approach to allow unaccompanied minors to be sponsored and hosted on the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme, were established.
8. The response to the military invasion of Ukraine and subsequent humanitarian efforts (including the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship visa scheme) were managed in Leicestershire through Emergency Management processes. The emergency response was stepped down in December 2022 and the local management of the scheme and additional support managed within Children and Family Services. The funding for this is provided by central government and ringfenced.
9. This is the first specific report to Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the local response to the war in Ukraine and specifically the local management of the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme.
10. The Ukraine visa schemes have developed since the original set up with 'thank you' payments for hosts on the sponsorship scheme being extended from the initial year to two years in early 2023 and then for the full length of guests' visas by the end of 2023.
11. In January 2023, the tariff payment for new arrivals reduced to £5,900 for arrivals from 1 January 2023 onwards. 'Thank you' payments for sponsors hosting guests in their second or subsequent year were increased by Central government to £500 per month.
12. In February 2024 the family scheme and extension scheme were closed to new applications, the length of new visas on the sponsorship scheme was reduced from three years to 18 months, and new visa sponsors had to be settled or British citizens. The latter prevented a trend of Ukrainians moving into their own accommodation and then sponsoring visas for family members. The Government also announced the set-up of the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme to allow any Ukrainian on any Ukraine visa scheme to apply for an 18-month visa extension.
13. In October 2024 hosts who were close family members of their guests were made ineligible for 'thank you' payments for all new 'thank you' payment claims.
14. In February 2025 the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme was launched with 'thank you' payments for hosts of Ukrainians moving from Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme to the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme. In addition, an exception was made to the sponsorship scheme so that Ukrainians could sponsor new visas for their children who had previously not had a visa. The Home Office will not provide any information to Local Authorities regarding Ukraine Permission Extension visas. Local Authorities need to gather this from guests and their hosts in order to carry out these functions. The government also confirmed that any time in

the UK on the Ukraine visa schemes does not count towards any consideration of settled status.

15. From April 2025 Central government has reduced all 'thank you' payments back to £350 per month.

Background

Local Emergency response

16. In Leicestershire, as part of the partnership emergency response, resources across the County Council were brought together to set up processes and procedures required to carry out the required functions for the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme, and to manage the scheme and carry out the functions in partnership with the district councils for property inspections, local integration and housing support.
17. A number of volunteers from across organisations staffed a welcome point at East Midlands Airport to welcome people arriving there into Leicestershire and the surrounding areas.
18. With the scale of arrivals and work, the emergency response determined that a dedicated team to support the scheme for Leicestershire was required. Recruitment for this team began in August 2022. The team manager and initial staff were in place by November 2022 and the team fully in place by April 2023.

Ukrainians seeking sanctuary in Leicestershire

19. At the end of March 2025 1,279 Ukrainians have arrived to sponsors in Leicestershire on the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. This includes 409 children, seven of which are considered unaccompanied minors at some point.
20. The Service is aware that a number of Ukrainians arrived to stay with family members in Leicestershire on the Ukraine Family Scheme. However, the Service has not been provided with information on these from the Home Office and therefore do not know the number that have arrived via this route.
21. At the end of April 2025 296 Ukrainians including 52 children remain in 166 hosting arrangements. Other Ukrainians have moved into private accommodation in Leicestershire or surrounding areas, moved to other areas of the country or left the UK.
22. All unaccompanied children have transitioned to adulthood or left the area, returning to Ukraine or living with a family member in another area.

Support provided in Leicestershire

23. In order to support Ukrainians seeking sanctuary from war to adapt and integrate to life in Leicestershire a range of measures and support were put in place by local organisations including gym memberships and bus passes. The Department for Education provided one-off funding to be used by March 2024 to be used to support integration into education for Ukrainian children.

24. Recognising the rural nature of the County, the variety of public transport providers and dispersed nature of host accommodation, Leicestershire County Council set up a travel grant for Ukrainians on the Sponsorship scheme. The grant of £65 per person was initially applied for via the Council's website. From November 2023 this was automatically added to the welcome payment for all new arrivals, following analysis of grants applied for and provided.
25. The County Council school admissions team supported Ukrainian children to access schools in Leicestershire, which children and families have found essential in integrating and supporting their wellbeing. School Transport has been provided where necessary with exceptions to policy put in place to recognise the lack of choice Ukrainians have had in where they initially live in Leicestershire, funded through the scheme funding.
26. Additional English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision has been funded through the scheme and provided by Adult Learning, recognising language is key to accessing employment and other services and living well in Leicestershire. This has included summer schools in the summer of 2022, 2023, and 2024. In 2024, in response to feedback and identified needs from guests, discrete courses supporting guests with no English language skills and conversation classes to support broader and informal language skills development were set up. Many Ukrainians also enrolled on mainstream ESOL courses.
27. By April 2023 the Support team was fully in place at the County Council comprising:
 - Three Support workers to carry out welfare checks, provide a first point of contact for guests or host concerns and support guests to access services they need;
 - One Social Worker to oversee work with Unaccompanied Minors and safeguarding issues.
 - Two Housing Options Officers and 1 Rematching Co-ordinator to support guests with accommodation needs, either seeking and supporting move to new hosts, or to understand and access private rental provision;
 - One Portal Co-Ordinator to oversee, develop and manage data, funding and reporting processes;
 - Two Triage Officers to support checks and funding processes, data management and respond to queries;
 - One Project Manager to manage the team and develop the local approach.
28. The Support team was initially set up for one year. As the war continued and the scheme was extended, the team was extended to July 2024, then July 2025, and now with the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme to July 2026.
29. By January 2023 the team put in place processes to ensure almost all guests were visited within two weeks of arrival. By July 2023 Support Officers had cleared the backlog of welfare visits that were outstanding from the start of the scheme.

30. Support Officers keep in touch with guests and hosts, responding to queries, working to support hosting relationships to continue, and respond to safeguarding issues. Officers have also supported guests to understand and access health services, benefits, and employment and training opportunities, understand education and respond to bullying, and to understand changes to the scheme.
31. The team has sought to enhance engagement with Ukrainians and hosts by attending community groups and events, helping develop local support groups, and organising specific engagement and information events, alongside drop-ins connected to ESOL classes.
32. From November 2023 a Refugee Host Support service to build goodwill and provide an enhanced support service for hosts. The service includes a 24hr helpline, access to a range of resources to support hosts to host well, and financial and legal advice and counselling sessions.
33. Over time Support Officers have been able to build good relationships of trust with hosts and guests, seen through increased contact from guests - in particular regarding concerns and queries, and increased engagement by guests in difficult circumstances. Follow up visits for all hosts and guests who had been in hosting arrangements for two years or more has identified some really positive stories.
34. The Rematching Co-ordinator has worked to recruit new hosts, build a pool of emergency hosts and match guests who need to move on to new hosts. The Service has rematched 165 Ukrainians to new hosts in Leicestershire since the start of the scheme.
35. Housing Officers provide information on options for move on into private accommodation, carry out housing assessments, and help Ukrainians find, move into and settle in independent accommodation. The Service has also funded furniture support linked to a broader Council contract to prevent homelessness to enable Ukrainians to move into private accommodation.
36. The team has supported 98 families with housing advice including direct support to 50 families to move into their own accommodation.
37. Through district councils' homelessness processes, the scheme has funded temporary emergency accommodation for Ukrainians and rent and deposit payments for Ukrainians moving into private rental accommodation, where they could not afford this. With the early support and preventative work of Housing Options Officers, the Service has reduced the amount needed to be spent on temporary accommodation year on year.
38. As the number of Unaccompanied Minors arriving was not as high as expected the Social Work post was not extended beyond 2024 and the two remaining

unaccompanied minors still in hosting arrangements were overseen initially within Social Care and then the Homes for Ukraine team with Social Care oversight, as arrangements were working well.

39. The scheme has funded capacity in Social Care to support ongoing safeguarding checks on hosts and sponsors and any safeguarding matters. The scheme has also funded additional capacity for a Welfare Rights Officer for benefits support for Ukrainians.
40. From June 2024 a Participation Officer: Displaced and Unaccompanied Children was funded for a one-year project to work across the Homes for Ukraine and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) teams to run events to reduce isolation for Ukrainian children and produce resources highlighting the voice of displaced and unaccompanied children to support practice development across partners.
41. Three events for Ukrainian young people have been run to date. These have been well received and have allowed over 60 young people aged 11-18 from across the county to connect with each other. The events have also incorporated information and support including regarding education and choices, coping with the effects of trauma and making decisions about the future in places of uncertainty. This post and project are to be extended to December 2025 to build on the good feedback and close off these areas of work.
42. In response to needs identified in schools the Service set up a School Support Grant in January 2025 to provide additional funding for schools accepting new Ukrainian arrivals for the 2024/25 academic year following the ending of the DfE grant in March 2024. This is in recognition of the really positive impact school, including a good transition into school, has on young people's wellbeing.
43. Levels of presenting demand for support required for Mental Health and trauma has been lower than anticipated. Some community-based support has been funded through the Community Grant, and an evidence based Ukrainian language parent-child mental health support programme is being piloted in 2025. A national support scheme run by Barnardo's has now ended.

Voluntary and Community Support

44. Early in 2022 volunteers in local communities set up support groups in their area to help Ukrainians to settle. Many of these have been maintained by local volunteers and Ukrainians in local areas. Groups continue in Hinckley, Charnwood, Market Harborough, Oadby and Melton, as well as the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain at the Kalyna club in Leicester. The team continues to liaise with these groups to maintain visibility and accessibility, provide support and gain community feedback.

45. A Ukrainian School runs in Leicester for children across the County and City. It provides Ukrainian education, and activities for Ukrainian children and families.
46. In 2024 Leicestershire County Council set up a Ukrainian Community Grant to support local groups to provide community and peer support to meet needs of Ukrainians in Leicestershire. This is a key strand in supporting ongoing independence of Ukrainians.
47. The grant fund has awarded £41k to date across 14 projects including: Community events and support; Ukrainian school – activities for children and families; Trauma recovery wellbeing sessions; Ukrainian library education and cultural support; Sports outreach and fitness; Integration workshops; English language and wellbeing programme.
48. The Service will consider the monitoring from the initial round of funding and based on this look to continue this funding in 2025/26 to continue to mobilise community support.

Communication and Engagement

49. The support team commenced regular communication with hosts in December 2022 via a newsletter and commenced regular communication with guests via a Ukrainian language newsletter from February 2023.
50. The support team carried out an online survey in 2023 to get views on forward support needs. The feedback from this was used to shape support approaches, initiate the work with young people, and shape ESOL provision.
51. In 2024 the Service set up Community Champions to support us to get messages and communication out into community and local Ukrainians social media groups.
52. The team ran information and feedback events online and in community locations in January 2025 to provide people with information about Ukraine Permission Extension and support available and continue to seek feedback on forward support needs.

'Thank you' payment top ups

53. Since the winter of 2022 the Council has agreed to top up the 'thank you' payments for the months of November to March in recognition of additional costs for hosts. In 2022/23 this was £150 per household per month, in 2023/24 this was £160 per household per month, in 2024/25 this was £170 per household per month. This has been funded from the tariff funding.
54. With the national changes to 'thank you' payments from April 2025, and in response to feedback from guests and hosts the Council will top up all 'thank you' payments by

£150 to £500 per month, to be funded from the tariff funding, but the Service is not intending to add a winter top up.

Forward Demand

55. Hosting rules relating to the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme mean that some Ukrainians could be hosted in Leicestershire to October 2028 or potentially beyond.
56. It is possible that Ukrainians will be able to apply for further periods of extension to their visas after their first one. However, they will not be able to be hosted in those periods.
57. Approximately a third of currently hosted guests will not be able to be hosted after December 2026, A third will not be able to be hosted after July 2027 and hosting for the remaining third will end between then and October 2028.
58. The forward demand for support is difficult to predict with the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing conflict. It is anticipated that a lower capacity of support will be required from October 2026.
59. The support team have had increasing approaches for housing support from guests who had already moved off the scheme into Private Renting but are struggling to maintain this and from Ukrainians on the family scheme, particularly relating to understanding and accessing housing.

Resource Implications

60. The Council's work relating to the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme is fully-funded through the tariff funding for the scheme provided by Central government, and the reimbursement of 'thank you' payments paid at the national rate.

Background papers

61. None

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

62. None

Equality Implications

63. The recommendations in this report directly support Equality Diversity, Inclusion and Community Cohesion.
64. The response of the Council and its partners has been based on providing support to Ukrainians in line with existing policy and procedures, for example regarding homelessness and school transport to support community cohesion. However policy and support have been applied in a way that recognises the specific additional needs

and barriers faced by Ukrainians fleeing war, including language and cultural barriers limited choice in their initial and further location in Leicestershire, and uncertainty of their future plans and location.

65. The ongoing support provided by the scheme aims to continue to support Ukrainians to integrate into communities and empower them to access existing services.

Human Rights Implications

66. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The scheme is operated in line with Central government guidance to provide a humanitarian response for Ukrainians fleeing war.

Officer(s) to Contact

Sharon Cooke
Assistant Director – Targeted Early Help and Children’s Social Care
Telephone: 0116 305 5479
Email: Sharon.Cooke@leics.gov.uk

James Fox
Homes for Ukraine Project Manager (job share)
Telephone: 0116 305 8077
Email: James.Fox@leics.gov.uk

Elizabeth Esnouf
Homes for Ukraine Project Manager (job share)
Telephone: 0116 305 0103
Email: Elizabeth.Esnouf@leics.gov.uk

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